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## The Neighborhood Update

This Issue Includes Articles On:

- ♦ Fighting Corruption and Bid-Rigging
- ♦ Improving Indoor Air Quality in Schools
- ♦ The New Ban on Smoking in Restaurants
- ♦ A New Health Plan for Small Businesses

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW FLEISCHMANN  
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## Capitol Newsbriefs

### Protecting Veterans

In 2003 the General Assembly took several actions to protect veterans.

The legislature worked to ensure that veterans of the first and second Gulf Wars gain proper recognition and benefits. A new law requires that veterans who incurred 90 days of active duty service after August 2, 1990 will be eligible for property tax exemptions, education and other benefits. (PA 03-85)

Also, the assembly modified the current veterans' property-tax exemption to allow cities and towns to adopt new, broader standards that encompass more people. We increased the income eligibility limits for this optional property tax exemption by \$25,000 to \$51,100 for single veterans or a surviving spouse, and \$56,900 for married couples. The new limits can be modified annually to reflect inflation. (Under prior law, the exemption was capped at \$10,000.) The law also allows cities to raise the exemption to 10% of the property value. (PA 03-44)

Finally, the legislature recognized that, when National Guard reservists are called up to serve our country, personal lives can be disrupted. Legislation enacted this year requires financial institutions and federal banks to maintain for two years and two months the mortgage application of any U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard reservist called into active duty after submitting a mortgage application but prior to the application's approval. (PA 03-24)

### Maximizing Federal Funds

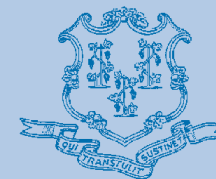
It is especially important in times of fiscal crisis that the state maximize its efforts to seek federal funds. For that reason, I have consistently co-sponsored legislation to make sure Connecticut accesses all federal funds available. Unfortunately, Governor Rowland has vetoed this legislation, indicating he believes the state is already doing all it can to utilize federal resources.

The numbers, however, tell a different story. Though Connecticut is first among the states in revenues it sends to Washington, it is 45th in funds allocated for state needs. Federal funds make up only 18% of Connecticut's budget, the least of any New England state. The legislation I advocated would have required that the state develop a plan and specific steps to ensure that Connecticut seeks every opportunity to obtain and leverage federal funds. Such funds could be used for prevention programs that would improve childrens' lives and reduce our long-term costs. (PA 03-157)

I will continue to work for enactment of such a measure in the year to come.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW FLEISCHMANN 18TH DISTRICT, WEST HARTFORD



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November, 2003

Dear Neighbors,

I write to share information on some of the noteworthy bills that the General Assembly enacted during the 2003 legislative session.

In the newsletter that follows, you will find articles on new laws affecting government reform, child protection, public health, and a number of additional topics.

This newsletter does not - and cannot - cover every new law enacted in 2003. So, if you need additional information, please contact my Capitol office at 240-8585, or email me [Andrew.Fleischmann@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Andrew.Fleischmann@po.state.ct.us). I will do my best to get you the materials you seek.

Finally, this newsletter does not address the state budget mess that dominated this year's special legislative session. As you may already know, I strongly opposed the budget and budget implementation bills that eventually won passage during the summer. I feel strongly that, if Connecticut is to maintain its economic competitiveness and quality of life, we cannot afford the drastic cuts to investments in health care, education, social services and economic development included in this year's budget. I will be doing all I can in the coming year to restore fairness and long-term vision to Connecticut's ordering of its budget priorities.

Thank you to all of you who took the time to contact me this past year regarding issues of concern to you. Please know that, in making my legislative decisions, I take your calls, e-mails, letters and faxes into account.

Best wishes to you and your family for a safe, healthy autumn and winter.

Sincerely

Andrew Fleischmann  
State Representative

### Assembly Enacts Anti-Bid Rigging, Anti-Bribery Law Fleischmann Helps Win New Law to Safeguard Public Funds

Cleaning up state government and protecting taxpayers from fraud and corruption was a top priority for me - and much of the General Assembly - this past year. The legislature responded to federal investigations of bribery and bid-rigging by passing House Bill 6417, An Act Concerning State Construction Contracts.

This comprehensive reform package, which I strongly advocated, establishes a rigorous pre-qualification process for bidders on state contracts. It ensures greater legislative oversight of state construction projects. In addition, it:

- Requires contractors to prequalify for projects owned by the state.
- Requires advertising on any state project.
- Prohibits any state employee with decision-making authority from speaking with any contractor bidding on a public project.
- Prohibits state officials and employees from accepting gifts from prequalified building contractors.
- Requires state agencies to evaluate contractors after construction of a project is complete.



This new law will help restore integrity to a state bidding process that has been undermined by scandal in the last year. It will help ensure that public funds go where they belong, toward well designed, well constructed projects - not to corrupt friends of those with decision-making power. (PA 03-215)



## Economic Development

### Permitting Small Employers to Participate in the State Health Plan

This spring, the General Assembly passed legislation I have advocated for years to increase access to health insurance for small businesses and their employees. In Connecticut today, there are roughly 77,000 workers in companies with fewer than 25 employees who do not have access to affordable health insurance. A new law the legislature enacted this year makes small businesses eligible to purchase group hospital, medical, and surgical health insurance through the state employee health plan. It also opens the state plan to all nonprofit corporations, not just those with state contracts. This new measure will help reduce the cost of health insurance for small businesses and nonprofits, increase the number of people with health insurance in the state, and improve the overall effectiveness of Connecticut's health care system. (PA 03-149)

## Consumer Protection

### Blocking SPAM Email

During its regular session, the legislature passed a new law to help eliminate unsolicited advertising e-mail (SPAM). Anyone sending unsolicited email to a Connecticut resident must now include the word "ADV" in the subject line, must include a toll-free telephone number, and/or a valid e-mail address that allows recipients to unsubscribe. Recipients of emails that fail to meet these guidelines are empowered to sue for violations.

SPAM poses a nuisance that will likely be with us for a long time to come. Connecticut's new law will not eliminate it. But our new measure will give consumers a new tool to employ in dealing with those who exploit the internet in unauthorized, illegal ways. (PA 03-128)



## Environmental Protection

### Moratorium on Pipelines and Cables Across Long Island Sound

By extending the moratorium on projects in Long Island Sound, the General Assembly ensured that all environmental concerns and requirements are met before any project moves forward. This moratorium freezes any final decisions on any electric power line, gas pipeline, or telecommunications line crossing Long Island Sound that requires either a certificate of environmental compatibility from the Connecticut Siting Council or approval by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Many Connecticut resident, including myself, are deeply concerned about cross-sound cable projects that may jeopardize marine ecosystems. This new law ensures that, while the potential environmental dangers posed by such projects remain unclear, such projects will not move forward. (PA 03-148)

### Reducing Mercury Emissions

Over the past several years, many Connecticut residents have become aware of a serious problem: Mercury - which is highly toxic - being released into the air by electric generation facilities that burn coal. This type of pollution is both dangerous and avoidable. For that reason, I strongly supported a new law which requires all coal-burning electric plants to reduce the amount of mercury they emit into our air. Specifically, the measure requires that all plants reduce their mercury emissions rates by 90% in the coming years. Passage of this measure was a victory for clean air, public health, and the fight to reduce the emission of toxins in our state; I am proud to have played a part in the passage of this bill. (PA 03-72)



## Protecting Connecticut's Children

### Improving Indoor Air Quality in Schools

A new law I supported will protect the air quality in Connecticut schools in a number of ways. The new measure:

- Requires school districts to conduct environmental site assessments at all school construction sites;
- Requires operation and maintenance of heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems in accordance with prevailing standards;
- Mandates that school districts implement an inspection and evaluation program; and
- Allows boards of education to establish committees to increase student and staff awareness of indoor air quality.

Taken together, these steps will help ensure that our teachers and students can work and learn in a safe, healthy environment. With the incidence of asthma and pulmonary disease increasing dramatically among children, Connecticut can not afford to maintain the status quo. (PA 03-220)



### Student Health Care Safeguards

The legislature is bringing Connecticut schools up to date on a range of additional health care issues. Thanks to a new law, diabetic students can now test their own glucose levels in school so long as they have an order from their doctor. Paraprofessionals will be allowed to administer EpiPen injectors in dealing with severe allergic reactions (which can be fatal in cases where epinephrine is not administered quickly enough). The legislature also clarified that students cannot be denied school transportation because they need to carry EpiPens or similar equipment for life-threatening allergies. (PA 03-211)

### Amber Alert System – Statewide Instant Messaging to Protect Children

The Amber Alert system rapidly distributes critical information to law enforcement officials - and the public - following the abduction of a child. State and local police, in partnership with the Connecticut Lottery, have announced the creation of a statewide instant message system that will broadcast emergency messages to nearly 3000 lottery terminals, 300 of which have instant message boards. Such steps were made possible by legislation I supported during the 2003 legislative session. (PA 03-111)

### Promoting After-School Programs

High quality after-school programs enhance education and help keep children safe. Recognizing this, the assembly passed a law requiring the Education Commissioner, Social Services Commissioner and Executive Director of the Commission on Children to form a committee on after-school programs. The committee - consisting of individuals currently involved in after-school programs, local elected officials, business officials, teachers and community agencies - may make recommendations and file a report on a statewide after-school program by January 1, 2004. The education commissioner is also empowered to seek funding for after-school programs from private organizations that do not receive state education grants. (PA 03-206)

## Safeguarding Public Health

### Reducing Exposure to Second-Hand Smoke in Connecticut

A new law that I strongly supported bans smoking in restaurants across Connecticut. The Connecticut Restaurant Association (CRA) supported this step; a majority of their members agreed that, given the demonstrated detrimental effects of secondhand smoke on employees and customers, the time for a ban had come. And the CRA preferred a statewide ban to a local approach, which, in their view, would have created inequities.

Many people don't realize that the same law banning smoking in restaurants also banned it in most workplaces where five or more people work, except in specially ventilated smoking rooms, and in state and municipal buildings, most health care institutions, and private college and university dorms. (It was already banned in public college dorms.) Unless the legislature changes course this spring, the ban will also cover taverns, cafes, and most institutions with liquor permits as of April 1, 2004. The law allows smoking in the outdoor areas of some alcohol-serving establishments. It permits smoking in only 25% of a hotel or motel's guest rooms. The ban, however, does not apply to private clubs whose liquor permits were issued before May 1, 2003. (PA 03-45)

With passage of this measure, Connecticut moved to the forefront of states that are protecting people from the carcinogenic and toxic effects of secondhand smoke. Though I have been deeply disappointed by the legislature's failure to use tobacco settlement funds to reduce the rate of smoking in our state, I am pleased that the assembly proved able to pass this important new measure.

